2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FR5 Ngoni FR5

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Herding as preparation for war

Preparation for war began in youth. When boys were about ten or twelve they were sent to herd goats or calves; when they were older they herded the cattle. At this time the boys were in the bush with their elders who were often haughty and fierce. The older herders taught the boys how to fight and how to defend themselves. They taught them to fight with twigs and sticks; the older herders fought with *izinduku* (knobkerries) and *izinkhonjo* (wooden swords). They were not allowed to fight with real spears though some had them. The older herders stirred up the hearts of the younger to fight and taught them to strike each other with knobkerries and to use little shields. If the herders of one village met the herders of another, the bulls were teased till they fought, and the little herders also. The small herders were not allowed to say anything about the herding to their parents. The older herders also loved to fight as in war with those of other villages. At such times the older men and even the elders came out from the village to see the battle and to stir up the hearts of the boys. If the herders of one village ran away they were laughed at, but the winners were greatly praised.

At the time when the cattle ate the refuse in the maize-gardens, after harvest, fighting most often broke out. Some of the boys provoked their neighbours to go and drive the cattle into the maize-fields of another village deliberately. The custom was that cattle might eat in the maize-gardens of their own village and the boys ought to ask if they may go into the fields of others. The herders did this to annoy the other herders and to start a fight. Often a great struggle was the result and the young men of the village who had outgrown herding joined in the fight to help the youngsters of their village. But they did it sensibly, none caused a wound with a spear, for anyone who did that was punished by law.

So the boys grew accustomed to the first steps in fighting which would help them later in war. Those who knew how to protect themselves with a knobkerry and small shield had no scars on their heads, but there were many long ago who had scars from fighting in the herding time. Children of the chief were in the same predicament—if they could not defend themselves they were beaten by their herding companions and possibly got their heads broken. The flowing of blood was not considered very serious, only if one did it in a stealthy way then he had to pay compensation. In this way the boys grew up with stout hearts and loved fighting.

Another thing which excited the boys was the custom of whistling. The boys were very expert and quick in expressing changes of mood in whistling. This was done so that the cattle would go carefully or quickly, but also when they were fighting the herders loved to whistle and even the older men in war did so also. The whistling stirred up the hearts of those who were thinking of running away. There were many ways of whistling and some were very good at it.

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Enlistment

539 702

When the young men reached the age of 21–26 they left off herding. Sometimes it was their fathers who stopped them, sometimes they themselves wished to stay at home. They took their shields (*amahewu*) and

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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1930's that the Ngoni did not live as well as they might and had, in fact, an impoverished diet, because they did not make full use, and sometimes very little use, of the milk and meat which they had available. In pre-European days, when the possession of cattle was confined to the Paramount, the chiefs and leading *ahumuzana*, there was a continuous slaughter of animals to provide a regular diet of meat and *ulubende*, the cooked blood which the Ngoni liked very much. The heads of the big houses saw that there was always on hand *amasi*, the milk curds which was the form in which adults took their milk, fresh milk being reserved for young children and herd-boys. This provision of meat, *ulubende* and *amasi* was only possible for those who had plenty of cattle, and in both kingdoms wars and raids were carried out partly to obtain fresh supplies of cattle from neighbouring and unconquered tribes. As we saw in the chapter on the Paramount, in pre-European days the *ahumuzana* who lived near enough to the royal village made a practice of calling frequently, if not daily, and such calls were rewarded by their being asked to eat with the Paramount, and 'food' in those days was predominantly meat. Between fighting seasons, that is during the rains, the young men (*amajaha*) who were newly recruited to the regiments were kept busy in and around the Paramount's village and the head villages of the *ahumuzana*, mending fences, making shields, and clearing new land. When they were thus employed they also were fed by the Paramount or *mulumuzana*, who regarded these periodic feasts for the *amajaha* as one of the first calls on the consumption of his cattle. The Ngoni later rationalized this earlier procedure of restricting meat and milk consumption to certain groups of people by arguing that it made the young warriors strong and able to fight and endure hardships, and they declared that the senior men and women who also shared the Paramount's supplies lived long and had great wisdom and strength of character. This rationalization was not only looking back to a past Utopia. It was also based on the argument that Europeans ate meat regularly and that they were strong, both physically and politically.

The European criticism in the 1930's that the Ngoni did not make full dietary use of their cattle and their products was justified, but there are two factors to note in this connexion. One was that the number of those who lived well on meat and milk in the old days was relatively small—confined in fact to cattle-owners, women owners of big houses, and warriors. The situation changed after the Europeans came, and a large number of people owned a few cattle and many of the new owners had no tradition about using their products. Among the cattle-owners of the Swazi clans the tradition of cooking blood and making curds continued and both were valued as food, but some of those who had only recently become owners of cattle did not know these practices, and I came across many cattle-owners of local tribes who did not know how to milk a cow. The failure to use milk in the Ngoni diet was due partly

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

After this formal visit had taken place, the young mother was free to visit her former home more often, and her relatives could come and see her and her baby in her husband's village. 593 594

Taking care of the baby

There were two special features of infant care among the Ngoni which were not found among the neighbouring peoples. One was the assignment of a nurse girl from outside the circle of relatives to care for a new infant. The nurse girl was chosen by the grandmother from among her dependent household staff, and was allotted to one particular baby. The girl, who was usually in her early teens and unmarried, was supervised by an older woman, also of the grandmother's household. This woman watched over the personal behaviour of several nurse girls, as well as seeing that they did their work properly as nurses. 854 357 [592] [883]

The nurse girl took charge of the baby in the early morning and kept it with her all day until nightfall, bringing it back to the mother at more or less regular intervals for suckling. The mother played with the baby if she felt like it, and sent for the nurse girl to bring it to her if strangers came and she wanted to display the child. The Ngoni commended this practice by saying that their women kept clean because they did not carry babies about all day on their backs. They admitted at the same time that many infants grew greatly attached to their nurse girls, to the extent of being happier with them than with their mother. The nurse girls did not take little babies far afield. They stayed around within the fences of the household or near at hand, helping with domestic chores, chatting to other nurse girls, helping to prepare meals, and eating with the baby's mother and anyone else who formed part of the household eating unit. At night, after she had given the baby to its mother, she went off to sleep in the hut of the older woman who was in charge of her and other nurse girls.

10: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1959
FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

595 628 is now danced by villages. The important men in one village suggest to another village that this dance should be held in the latter village. If this is agreed, beer is brewed in the second village and on the pre-arranged day many people from the first village come in procession from their village to the dance. The visiting dancers enter the cattle byre and start to dance. They are joined by people from the home village. The dancers are arranged in two lines, men on one side and women on the other, and the dance consists of a series of virtuoso performances by two or three men and women at a time in the space between the two lines, to the accompaniment of clapping and antiphonal singing. The dance is followed by drinking and more dancing. Later in the year, or in the next year, the host village goes to the home of the visitors, and the performance is repeated.

[533]

595 628 ●883 Of more frequent occurrence are dances involving girls only. These are usually held on Sunday afternoons, and as at the *ngoma* dances, at least two villages are involved. Here the initiative is taken not by the important men but by the senior unmarried girl in the village. She invites a girl of similar status in another village with whom she is acquainted, or whom she has seen dancing, to bring a team of girls to dance in her village. This kind of dance is competitive in that the visitors are opposed by a similar team of girls from the home village, who dance separately from the visitors until, at the end of the session, the two teams combine. That team which has danced best is held to be the winner, although there is always great doubt as to which team this is. The girl who invited the visitors is responsible for seeing that the visiting team is fed, although beer is not provided. No work is done in the gardens on Sundays, so that these dances always attract a large number of onlookers. As with *ngoma*, a return match is danced at some later date. The pairs of villages that are linked in these dance exchanges are not always those that contain many people related to one another. One girl may ask an acquaintance in another village to find a team; in one case the girl who made the invitation did not know the name of the girl she was inviting.

Beer-drinking

273 [271] [574] [272] Beer, water, and tea are the three main drinks of the Ngoni. The ordinary rules of hospitality govern the drinking of water, which is provided for the traveller whenever he asks for some. Tea is sold in the roadside stores known as hotels. Beer is more important socially